

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

March 16, 2006

Representative Ralph Regula  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, and  
Education  
Committee on Appropriations

Representative David R. Obey  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Labor,  
Health and Human Services, and  
Education  
Committee on Appropriations

Dear Chairman Regula and Ranking Member Obey:

We request that you include \$220.86 million for the Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) and \$100 million for the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program in the fiscal year 2007 Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill.

Federal support for these programs encourage improved efficiencies and cost-effectiveness of library services, enhance shared public access to information, promote use of technology, sharing of resources, and other collaborations and outreach not feasible across local and state boundaries.

**Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA)**

Around the country, knowledgeable librarians use LSTA funding, the only federal program solely devoted to aiding libraries, to help patrons access essential information on a wide range of topics. They provide training on resume development; job bank web searches; workshops on career information; links to essential educational and community services; assistive devices for people with disabilities; family literacy classes; homework help and mentoring programs, and so much more.

Libraries proved to be an especially vital part of communities in the immediate aftermath of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Libraries stayed open late, added more resources, and went mobile to help get evacuees much-needed information. Thousands of evacuees used library computers to identify government assistance programs and to locate family and friends. Evacuees continue to use libraries in order to apply for driver's licenses, to follow-up on FEMA and other key government reports, and to find jobs and financial assistance.

Thanks to LSTA, libraries are also working to close the "digital divide" in many of our nation's distressed communities by providing no fee, public access to computers and the Internet. In 1996, only 28 percent of public library systems offered public Internet access. Today, due to increased resources by the Congress and improved efforts by libraries across the country, more than 95 percent of library buildings offer no fee public access computing, and 14 million Americans regularly use these computers.

While Internet use has increased substantially in the United States, nearly half of all American households still do not have computers or Internet access. By allocating \$220.86 million for LSTA, Congress could provide library users nationwide with improved access to information and library services could be targeted to people of diverse geographic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, to individuals with disabilities, and to people with limited literacy or skills. The President's request for \$220.86 million includes an increase in the state grant program, bringing funding for that program to \$171,500,000. This funding level will finally allow full implementation of a 2003 law to provide a more equitable distribution of state formula grants.

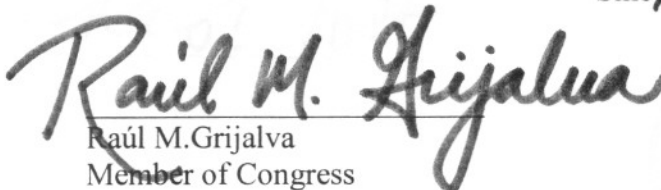
### **Improving Literacy Through School Libraries**

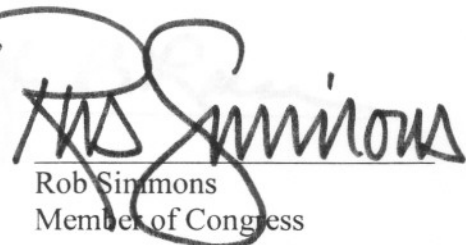
One of the central goals of the No Child Left Behind Act is a commitment to dramatically improve reading achievement among students. Both Congress and the Administration recognized that school libraries are critical partners in this effort when they included the Improving Literacy Through School Library program in the No Child Left Behind Act. The Department of Education's November 2005 evaluation of the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program found it has been successful in improving the quality of those school libraries receiving the grants.

We urge you to significantly boost funding for the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program to \$100 million. In FY 2004, out of approximately 700 applicants, only 92 grants were funded. Currently, only school districts in which 20 percent of the students served are from families with incomes below the poverty line are even eligible to apply. When funds are equal to or greater than \$100 million, Improving Literacy Through School Library funds could be distributed as formula grants to every state's department of education. In the four years grants have been awarded, nine states have never received funding under this program.

The Library Services and Technology Act and the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program provide critical funding for libraries of all kinds nationwide. Only by including the President's request for \$220.86 million for the LSTA and \$100 million for the Improving Literacy Through School Libraries program in the Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations bill will we ensure that library patrons of all ages have sufficient access to library and information services, support recruiting and educating the next generation of librarians, and provide libraries the resources they need to improve literacy skills and academic achievement.

Sincerely,

  
Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

  
Rob Simmons  
Member of Congress

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2006 Library Signers:

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